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Mr. *FALLE*'s SERMON

AT

WHITE-HALL, Dec. 30. 1694.

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SERMON

AT

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Of the Impunity of Bad Men in the World.

E. 10. 24 (19)

A

SERMON

Preach'd at

White-Hall,

Decemb. 30. 1694.

BIBL. CANT. CAP.

By PHILIP FALLE, Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.

Publish'd by Command.

LONDON,

Printed for *John Newton* at the *Three Pigeons*, over-against the *Inner-Temple-Gate*, in *Fleet-street*, 1695.

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LONDON,

Printed for John Newton at the Three Pigeons, over-against the Inner-Temple-Gate, in Fleet-Street, 1695.

Eccles. VIII. xi.

Because Sentence against an Evil Work is not executed speedily, therefore the Heart of the Sons of Men is fully set in them to do Evil.

NOthing has been more apt to give Offence, and to perplex the Minds of Men, than the Unequal Distribution of Rewards and Punishments in this Life. The Impunity of Bad Men in the World seems to many very hard to be accounted for. It may not therefore be amiss to have this Matter rightly stated, and satisfaction given to anxious and doubting Minds about it. Which, so far as God enables me, I shall attempt from the Words I have read. *Because Sentence against an Evil Work is not executed speedily, therefore the Heart of the Sons of Men is fully set in them to do Evil.*

They are the Words of a Great KING, the Result of that excellent Wisdom, with which God had enlarg'd his Royal Heart, and of the

long Observation he had made on the Ways of Providence in the Government of the World.

In speaking to them I shall,

First, Shew some very dangerous Mistakes that are about this Matter.

Secondly, Expound this Riddle of Providence, the Impunity of Bad Men in the World.

First, Shew some very dangerous Mistakes that are about this Matter. For, *because Sentence against an Evil Work is not Executed speedily, THEREFORE the Heart of the Sons of Men is fully set in them to do Evil.*

I. This has been the great Objection of Atheists in all Ages against the Being of a God (*a*). The Impunity of Bad Men in the World has been the common Popular Pretence to oppose the Belief of the Deity. That a God, arm'd with infinite and irresistible Power, should tamely suffer Bad Men to violate his Laws, and bid open Defiance to his Authority, and not to resent the Affront, by sending quick and exemplary Punishment on such Transgressors, is what they think cannot be reconciled to a Rational Apprehension. This, they say, is to destroy the Notion of a God; who, if he were, would

(*a*) Simplic. *in* Epictet. *Cap.* 38.

would Govern the World by a more steady Justice. The Story of *Diagoras* is well known, who, seeing a Wretch forswear himself and remain unpunish'd, became a Professed Atheist.

II. Others admit the Being of a God, but deny his Providence in the Administration of Human Affairs, because they see Bad Men unpunish'd in the World (*b*). They say, that if there was a Providence, sollicitous about the Rectitude or Obliquity of Men's Actions, it would dispense suitable Retributions. But the greatest Villanies triumph with Impunity in the World! And this, they say, is a reproach to Providence: And an Argument that God takes no care of the little things of this lower World: That Virtue and Vice are alike to him: That he looks with indifferency on the Good or Evil of Human Acts: Which the *Epicureans* do say to be indeed beneath the Dignity and Excellency of so elevated a Nature as God, taken up in the Contemplation of his own Perfections and Happiness, to be concern'd about.

(*b*) Cicer. *de Nat. Deor. Lib.* 3. § 81. *&c* Salvian. *de Gubern. Dei* passim.

III. Bad Men that own a God and a Providence, seeing their Crimes unpunish'd, fall into another Error. It raises them to a great Confidence

fidence about the Nature of those Actions which, because God does not Punish, they think cannot be Bad (c). They take this Impunity for a Token of the Divine Liking and Approbation: as *Dionysius* said the Gods were pleased with his Sacrilege, when they sent him a prosperous Voyage after he had robb'd their Temples (d). How often is Success urged in the World to justifie the goodness of an Action? This may have some weight also to Publick Societies, which have their Reward in this World. Outward Prosperity may be indeed a good Indication of God's Favour to Publick and National Interests; a very good Sign of his Blessing upon great Transactions wherein Kingdoms are concern'd. But it is a very fallacious Rule to judge of Particular Actions and Cases by these External Administrations of Providence. And there is this peculiar inconvenience in it, That it is the greatest Impediment I know to Repentance and Amendment of Life. For how should that Man Repent who is possessed with an Opinion, that a Fact, for which he is call'd upon to ask God Forgiveness, has had the Divine Stamp and Testimony of Success to prove the lawfulness of it? These Delusions are frequent among Men.

(c) *Prospe-rum ac fe-lix Scelus Virtus vo-catur.* Sen.

(d) Cicer. ut Supr. §. 83.

There

IV. There is a Fault incident to many otherwise Good Men. They are uneasie at the Impunity of Bad Men in the World. They repine at the Patience and Long-suffering of God towards them. And this undoubtedly is a Sin. For *is their Eye Evil because their Master is Good* (e)? And ought they not to acquiesce in the Divine Methods and Dispensations, and adore the Righteousness of God's Ways in the World, altho' perhaps they cannot comprehend them? Thus *Jonah* was Angry because God spared *Nineveh* (f). *I knew*, says he, *that thou art a Gracious God, and Merciful, slow to Anger, and of great Kindness, and repentest thee of the Evil.* A strange reason to be Angry with God for! And there appears to have been something of this Spirit and Temper in the Author of the LXXIII. Psalm (g). *As for me, my feet were almost gone, my Steps had well nigh slip'd. For I was envious at the Foolish, when I saw the Prosperity of the Wicked. For there are no Bands in their Death, but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other Men, neither are they plagued like other Men. Behold these are the Ungodly, who prosper in the World: They increase in Riches. Verily, I have cleansed my Heart in vain, and washed my hands in Innocency.*

(e) Mat. XX. 15.

(f) Jonah IV. 1, 2.

(g) Ver. 2. &c.

For all day long have I been plagued, and chaſtned every Morning. And *Jeremiah* expoſtulates thus the matter with God (*h*). *Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: Yet let me talk with thee of thy Judgments. Wherefore doth the way of the Wicked proſper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very Treacherouſly? Thou haſt planted them, yea, they have taken root: They grow, yea, they bring forth Fruit.*

(*h*) *Chap.* xii. *Ver.* 1, 2.

V. But the Great and Common Evil that is among Men, ariſing from the Impunity of Bad Men in the World, is, that there are very Few that from thence do not take Encouragement to go on ſecurely in their Sins: not dreading that Puniſhment which ſome think will never come; others look on at ſuch a Diſtance that the Apprehenſion of it is not ſtrong enough to make them *turn from their Evil Ways*: Which probably may be All the Wiſe KING intended in the Text, tho' the words may alſo bear a larger Conſtruction; For *to do Evil* are Terms of great Latitude. *Becauſe Sentence againſt an Evil Work is not executed ſpeedily,* THEREFORE *the Heart of the Sons of Men is fully ſet in them* TO DO EVIL.

Secondly,

Secondly, Expound this Riddle of Providence, the Impunity of Bad Men in the World.

1. Publick Societies or Bodies of Men are Punish'd in this World, tho' Particular Persons may not. By Publick Societies I mean Kingdoms, Nations, and States, and Churches; these being also considered as Societies of Christian Men, who have special Rules set them for their Conduct, in that Relation wherein they stand to each other. For instance. National Judgments for National Sins, are, Immoderate Droughts, excessive Rains, and Inundations of Waters, Contrary Seasons, and a Conflict in the Elements, all which cause Famines and Barrenness in the Earth: Pestilences, and other Contagious and Malignant Distempers, "Like That "which having lately raged over several Parts "of the Kingdom, has at last deprived us of "our Excellent, our Incomparable, QUEEN; "whose Pious, Just, Mild, and Prudent Govern-"ment, in Conjunction with our Gracious "SOVEREIGN, was so Great a Blessing "to these Nations; A Blessing which our Sins "made us unworthy of; Therefore God in his "Great Anger has taken her away from us,

" and Tranſlated Her to a better Crown: Conflagrations: Earthquakes: The Miſeries and Deſolations of unproſperous and unſucceſsful War: Infatuation of Publick Miniſteries and Councels: Civil Diſcords: and the like. Puniſhments attending Chriſtian Societies, are, Hereſies, or Errors in Doctrine, *Strong Deluſions* (*i*), A Lying and a Credulous Spirit ſent out among Men: Schiſms and Diſſentions among Brethren: Outward Perſecutions from Adverſaries: And laſtly, a removal of God's *Candleſtick* (*k*), and a transferring of his *Kingdom to others that will bring forth the Fruits thereof* (*l*). With ſuch Judgments as theſe Almighty God Puniſhes the Sins of Civil and Religious Communities in this World: And they are therefore call'd Temporal Judgments, becauſe they are inflicted here, and can be no where elſe; and to put a difference betwixt Them, and thoſe Eternal Judgments that are reſerved for Particular Bad Men in the other World.

(*i*) 2 Theſſ. ii. 11.

(*k*) Rev. ii. 5.

(*l*) Matth. xxi. 43.

And God ſeldom delays theſe Judgments upon Societies, as he delays the Puniſhment of Particular Perſons, for this plain Reaſon: That, ſhould theſe Judgments be reſpited too long, they would not fall on thoſe Sinful Generations that have deſerved them, and have provoked God

God to ſend them abroad into the World. Thoſe Generations would paſs away, and, being gone, theſe Judgments would not reach them. The guilty Dead would not feel theſe Publick Calamities in their Graves.

2. As for Particular Bad Men, they are a Puniſhment to themſelves. A Bad Man always bears a ſecret Puniſhment within Him. Every ill Action he does expoſes him to the ſevere Rebukes and Laſhes of his own Conſcience (*m*). And there can hardly be a greater Puniſhment than a Guilty Mind to a Bad Man in this World. Moreover, the Tumult and Diſorder of his Paſſions, which claſh with each other, and often meet with exaſperating Difficulties in the purſuit of unlawful Objects, his reſtleſs Deſires, his awakening Fears, and Jealouſies, and Diſtruſts, and Thirſt of Revenge, Theſe, and a Thouſand things more of the like nature, diſturb the Peace and Tranquillity of his Soul. For *the Wicked are like the troubled Sea, when it cannot reſt, whoſe Waters caſt up Mire and Dirt: There is no Peace, ſaith my God, to the Wicked* (*n*). A Bad Man can never have that inward Complacency and Eaſe which is the peculiar Fruit of an innocent and well-

(*m*) Cicer. de Leg. Lib. 1. § 40 *Pœnas luunt homines non tàm Judiciis quàm angore Conſcientiæ.*

(*n*) Iſa. lvii. 20, 21.

ſpent

ſpent Life; which ſprings from a good Conſcience, and from calm and well-govern'd Paſſions. So that tho' we ſhould ſuppoſe a Bad Man to live Proſperouſly, as to all outward Enjoyments and Circumſtances of Life, and to depart at laſt from the World without any apparent Mark of Divine Diſpleaſure againſt him for his Sins, ſtill it cannot be ſaid that he goes off Unpuniſh'd, ſo long as whilſt he lived he carried theſe Tormentors in his Breaſt, *viz.* theſe Horrors and Anxieties of Conſcience, theſe fretting and vexatious Paſſions, which were a terrible Puniſhment tho' he ſuffer'd no other. And this *Plutarch* (*o*) urges, in anſwer to thoſe who in his Time denied the Divine Providence in the World, becauſe they ſaid the Wicked were not puniſh'd. Are they not puniſh'd who lie under ſuch cruel Agonies of Mind, and whom ſtill one raging Luſt or other robs of all the Good and Quiet of their Lives? which is the caſe of *every Soul of Man that doth Evil.*

(*o*) *Lib. de eis qui ſero puniuntur à Numine.*

3. Nor are Bad Men ſecure even againſt Outward Puniſhment. For Wickedneſs and Vice are not always Proſperous in the World. There have been in all Times innumerable Inſtances of

of Bad Men, who have been as Poor, and Wretched, and in every reſpect as Unhappy in the World, as others; have met with as many Misfortunes, and Diſappointments, and croſs Accidents; have been as deſtitute of all the Comforts of Life; and have had as Tragical Ends. Wickedneſs and Vice have a natural Tendency to make Men miſerable in this World: But Providence often interferes by more Immediate Puniſhments. God does not always Puniſh Bad Men in this World, but he does it ſometimes. Not a day but he cruſhes one bold Sinner or other into ruine. We too often call Caſualties, and Fortuitous Diſaſters, things that the Effects of the Divine Indignation, tho' it acts by Secondary Cauſes: But ſome Puniſhments bear very Signal Marks of Divine Vengeance, and one may viſibly diſcern *the Finger of God* in them. Therefore no Bad Man can promiſe himſelf Impunity even in this World, and *Sentence againſt an Evil Work* IS ſometimes *executed ſpeedily.*

This were enough to vindicate the Divine Juſtice and Providence from the Exceptions and Cavils of Men, tho' no more were ſaid in this Matter.

Matter. For this ſhews that there is a God; That he is no idle Spectator of Human Affairs; That he is an Enemy to Wickedneſs and Vice; That he is concern'd for the Honour and Majeſty of his Laws; And that many times Puniſhment hangs o'er a Sinner's head, like a Cloud charg'd with Thunder, ready to break upon him when he is leaſt aware of it. But I ſhall purſue this Argument further. For ſtill it is very evident that God does not always puniſh Bad Men in this World. He Puniſhes Some, but he Puniſhes not All. Many lead very Wicked Lives, who, ſetting aſide that inward Trouble of Mind, which no Bad Man can more or leſs be exempt from, live in great Proſperity and Affluency of all the Good Things of this World.

The End of Divine Puniſhment in this World muſt be the Correction or the Deſtruction of the Offender. But there are very good Reaſons why God does not always Puniſh Bad Men in this World, with reſpect to either of Theſe.

With

With respect to the *First*,

I. God does not always Punish Bad Men in this World, because he considers Men as Rational Creatures, and who ought therefore to be dealt with by Rational Methods. Present and Frequent Punishments would not be congruous to the Nature of Man. The Rod and the Whip are only fit for Beasts, Creatures void of Understanding, but of quick Sense, not to be argued but lasht into Duty by the Pungency of Present Pain. But to Man, endowed with Reason, capable of looking Forwards, and of taking a Prospect of Things tho' at never so great a Distance, the Threats of Future Punishment are a sufficient Check; not is it needful that God, in the ordinary Course of his Justice in this World, should use any other. I say, in the ordinary Course of his Justice, because some Examples may be necessary in the World. But, for the Generality of Men, This no doubt is the most suitable Method, because it leaves room for the exercise of the Pow-

ers of Reaſon. God has given to every Man Natural Notices of Good and Evil. To us Chriſtians he has added his Word for a more perfect Rule of Life. He Encourages Good Men: He Threatens the Bad: And he has actually Puniſh'd ſome, even in this World, for a Warning to others. After that, what can be proper for God to do more, but to leave the reſt and groſs of Mankind to the Uſe of that Reaſon he has given them? Should God be always buſie in Beating and Puniſhing Men in this World, it had been enough to have endow'd them with the Common Inſtinct or Senſe of Feeling. And accordingly I obſerve that St. *Paul*, in his Epiſtle to the *Romans* (*p*), calls that Service which God requires from Man in this World, λογικὴ λατρεία, *a Reaſonable Service*; that is, a Service grounded on the Conviction of the Judgment, and on the Principles and Deductions of Reaſon.

(*p*) *Ch.* xii. *Ver.* 1.

II. God does not always Puniſh Bad Men in this World, becauſe Man is a Free Agent: But Preſent Puniſhment would bring a Force and a Compulſion upon him, in con-

consistent with that Freedom; and his Obedience to God would not be Voluntary, because it were not Free (*q*). It would not be the Obedience of a Man, prompted by inward Inclination and Choice, but the Obedience of a *Machine*, mov'd by outward Violence and Impulse: There would be nothing Commendable in it. Here then must be Temperament, that the continual Awe and Dread of Punishment may not destroy the Freedom of the Will. Men ought to reverence the Divine Judgments, but they must not be so always under the Stroke and Terror of the Rod, as to be thereby depriv'd of the Liberty of their Actions. Thus God, in not executing speedy Punishment upon Sinners in this World, shews wonderful Wisdom, and a due Regard to the Frame of Humane Nature.

(*q*) *Vid.* Tertul. *adverſ.* Marcion. *Lib.* II. *Cap.* 5. & 6.

With respect to the *Second*,

I. God does not always Punish Bad Men in this World, because He *takes no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked* (*r*), and does not *afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men* (*ſ*). Now

(*r*) Ezek. xxxiii. 11.
(*ſ*) Lament. iii. 33.

tis very consonant to Reason that he should not hasten, what he does not *willingly*. And this gives a Noble Idea of the Divine Nature, free from Cruelty, raised above all the lowre and Vindictive Passions of Men; like that Glorious Heaven in which he dwells, where reigns an Eternal Sweetness and Serenity, while Storms and Tempests are form'd in the lower Regions. Were God pleased with the Sufferings and Miseries of Men, with what horrid Executions and Tragedies would he not every Day fill the World, when so many Blasphemies and Impieties against him call daily aloud for Vengeance? But our Gracious and Good God bears long with Sinners, because 'tis with Regret that he destroys his Creatures; who therefore may be more properly said to destroy themselves, since, when at any time they are punish'd, 'tis rather their Choice than his Act.

(y) Tit. Tertul. adverf. Marcion. Lib. II. Cap. 5. & 6.

II. God does not always Punish Bad Men in this World, that he may set Mankind an Example of Longanimity, and Meek-

(y) Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Lamen. iii. 33.

Meekneſs under Injuries, and of mutual Forbearance to each other. And the World needs ſuch an Example. *God is provoked every Day* (t): Yet God paſſes by thoſe Provocations, and bears with them that moſt grievouſly offend him. 'Tis to teach us to moderate our Heats, to conquer our Reſentments, and not upon every bad Turn that Men do unto us to fly to ſpeedy Revenge, and to Retaliate Evil for Evil. We ought to ſtudy nothing ſo much as to imitate the Divine Excellencies and Perfections; and then indeed we become like God, when, like him, we ſhew Kindneſs and good Will even to thoſe that deſerve our Hatred and our Averſion. *Love your Enemies, do good to them that hate you, and ye ſhall be the Children of the Higheſt, who is Kind to the Unthankful and to the Evil, who maketh his Sun to riſe on Evil and on the Good, and ſendeth his Rain on the Juſt and on the Unjuſt*, ſays our Bleſſed Lord and Saviour (u). This then is a very good Reaſon why God does not always Punish Bad Men in this World; and it muſt be agreeable to thoſe innate Impreſſions which all Mankind have of the Divine Nature,

(t) Pſ. vii. 11.

(u) Mat. v. 45. Luke vi. 35.

ture, forasmuch as *Plutarch* himself, a Heathen Philosopher, uses it on the like Occasion (*w*).

(*w*) *Lib. de eis qui serò puniuntur a Numine.*

And since the Words of the Text are the Words of a ROYAL PREACHER, and that this is too God-like a Virtue to be confin'd among Private Men, why may we not suppose that the Great Governor of the World designs this Lenity and Indulgence to Sinners for an Example also to Those whom he has constituted his Vice-gerents on Earth (*x*)? KINGS are called *Gods* in Scripture (*y*), and they all bear the Sacred Character of that Almighty Power that Rules the Universe; But then they may be truly said to be the lively Images of the Heavenly KING, when, like him, they are slow to Punishment, and shew Mercy where they might use Severity.

(*x*) Senec. *de Clem.* Lib. I. Cap. 5. *Deorum sibi animum asserens PRINCEPS, alios ex Civibus suis, quia utiles boniq; sunt, libens videat; alios in numerum relinquat. Quosdam esse gaudeat, quosdam patiatur.*

(*y*) *Psal.* LXXXII. 1. 6.

III. God does not always Punish Bad Men in this World, that they may have time to Repent and grow better. And this Reason is also given by the Heathen Moralist (*z*). *Though a Sinner do Evil an Hundred times, his Days are Prolong'd*, says our ROYAL PREACHER,

(*z*) Plutarch *ut supr.*

PREACHER, in the Verſe which follows the Text. *Prolong'd* no doubt for this, that, ſeeing the Iniquity of his Ways, he may *fly from the Wrath to come* (*a*), which the Divine Benignity intends all Men ſhould have the Wiſdom to do.

(*a*) Mat. iii. 7.

IV. God does not always Puniſh Bad Men in this World, becauſe this World is a State of Probation and Trial: And ſuch a State will not admit of Preſent Puniſhment. For in order to be prov'd Men muſt be left in a manner to themſelves.

V. God does not always Puniſh Bad Men in this World, becauſe they are to *have their Portion in it* (*b*). Few Men are ſo very Bad as not to do ſome Good one time or other: And though That may not be enough to entitle them to the Glorious Rewards of another World, it may be enough to procure them a Reprieve from Puniſhment, and ſome Temporal Bleſſings in This. For the Righteous Judge of the World will not ſuffer the Good Actions even of Bad Men to go without a Recompence:

(*b*) Pſ. xvii. 14.

pence: And it muſt be ſuch an one as this World will afford. *Jehu* was certainly a Bad Man; yet, for one Good Work that he did, in deſtroying the Houſe of *Ahab*, as God had Commanded him, he enjoyed great Proſperity in his days, he died in Peace, and God promiſed that *his Children of the Fourth Generation ſhould ſit on the Throne of Iſrael* (*c*). Thus, the Wicked Rich Man was told in Hell that *in his Life time he had received His Good Things* (*d*).

(*c*) 2 Kings x. 30.

(*d*) Luke xvi. 25.

VI. God does not always Puniſh Bad Men in this World, becauſe they are ſo intermix'd with the Good, that the One cannot be Puniſhed but the Other muſt participate in their Puniſhment: God therefore ſpares the Bad, in pity and compaſſion to the Good. If Bad Men did live in this World apart by themſelves, then God might puniſh them without involving the Good in their Calamity: But there are ſuch common Tyes of Blood, and Kindred, of Alliance, and Friendſhip, of Intereſt, and the like, betwixt Them, that the Puniſhment of the One would be a real Tor-

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ment and Affliction to the other. A Righteous Father may have a very Wicked Son, and a Righteous Son may have a very Wicked Father: But could a Father ſee his own Bowels, or a Son Him that begot him, hurried to Puniſhment, and not be concern'd at it? There will be a Time when all theſe Relations of Fleſh and Blood will ceaſe; and That will be a proper Seaſon for Puniſhment. In this World, the *Tares* cannot be *gathered* without *rooting up the Wheat with them*: Therefore they muſt both *grow up together until the Harveſt* (e). In Publick and National Judgments Good Men indeed do often ſuffer undiſcriminately with the Bad, becauſe it cannot be otherwiſe. But even Publick and National Judgments have been averted in favour to Good Men, who elſe muſt have ſhar'd in the Common Miſeries of their Country. *Sodom* it ſelf, that Wicked City, might *have remain'd until this day*, had there been but *Ten* Good Men in it. God would *not have deſtroy'd it for their ſakes* (f).

(e) Matth. xiii. 24. &c.

(f) Gen. xviii. 32.

VII. God does not always Puniſh Bad Men in this World, that he may exerciſe the Faith of Good Men. When a Good Man

ſees a Notorious Malefactor remain unpuniſh'd, nay, Flouriſh and Proſper, as tho' there was no God nor Providence in the World, 'tis an excellent Occaſion that God gives him to retire within Himſelf, to live above Senſe and External Shews and Appearances, to abſtract his Thoughts from Groſs and Corporeal Objects, to look beyond this Life, and to raiſe his Mind to the Contemplation of the Unſeen and Inviſible Things of another World; In a Word, *to walk by Faith*, and *not by Sight* (*g*). Such was the Faith of the ancient Servants of God, when in their Time unpuniſh'd and ſucceſsful Impiety o'erflow'd the World, and their *Righteous Souls were daily vex'd with the filthy Converſation of the Wicked* (*h*). *We look not at the things which are ſeen*, ſays the Apoſtle (*i*), *but at the things which are not ſeen.* And *This is that Faith that overcomes the World* (*k*). Should God execute Judgment in this World according to every Man's Deſerts, there would be little left for Good Men to exerciſe their Faith about. It would be no longer Faith, but Evidence. Good Men indeed may be ſurpriz'd at the Impunity of Bad Men

(*g*) 2 Cor. v. 7.

(*h*) 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8.

(*i*) 2 Cor. iv. 18.

(*k*) 1 John v. 4.

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in the World; But when they look further into the Matter, they will find great Reaſon to adore the Wiſdom and Equity of the Divine Counſels, and to cry out in the Language of the Scripture, *Great and Marvellous are thy Works, O Lord God Almighty! Juſt and True are thy Ways, thou King of Saints* (*l*)! (*l*) Rev. xv. 3.

VIII. God does not always Puniſh Bad Men in this World, becauſe, ſays *Plutarch*, (*m*) he reſerves them to be a Puniſhment to others. Even Good Men may need Correction. When they do ſo, and God will have the hands of Men to intervene in it, he does not uſually employ the Miniſtry of other Good Men to chaſtiſe them; He employs Bad Men, as fitteſt for that Work: And he makes the Bad Puniſh one another. So that Bad Men are indeed in the World, what Common Executioners are in the beſt and wiſeſt Governments. They are the Publick Lictors that carry the Rods and Axes of the Supream Dictator of the World, and muſt therefore be put in a Capacity to execute the Orders and Decrees of his Juſtice. This is to be underſtood more particularly of ſome Bad Men. Thoſe I mean (*m*) *Ut ſup.*

that are rais'd to Power and Authority in the World, and are thereby enabled to do ſo much the more Miſchief. And this is the Caſe of Tyrants, and other Great Oppreſſors, and Enemies of the Repoſe and Happineſs of Mankind. All theſe muſt be confeſs'd to be Inſtruments in the hand of God, for the Puniſhment of thoſe whom through their means, he intends to Puniſh in this World. But they themſelves muſt remain Unpuniſh'd: At leaſt, until they have ſerv'd the Ends of His Juſtice: and then their Turn may alſo come to Drink of the Cup of his Fury, and to be Puniſh'd by others as Bad as themſelves.

And is not this admirable Wiſdom? In general, All Bad Men may be ſaid to be the Miniſters of the Divine Vengeance for the Puniſhment of each other. For being acted by Contrary Paſſions and Intereſts, led by Different Humours and Deſigns, they are perpetually thwarting and juſtling one another, and they are as Thorns and Goads in each other's ſide; the Hand of every one of them being continually *againſt his Fellow* (n). Which in great meaſure ſuperſedes the Neceſſity of more direct Puniſhment from God:

(n) Judg. vii. 22.

God: For they take the Work out of God's Hands: and in this World one Bad Man is a Plague and a Scourge to another.

IX. God does not always Punish Bad Men in this World, becauſe their Sins are not yet ripe for Puniſhment. The Meaſure of their *Iniquities is not yet full* (o). *Ne-mo repente fit Turpiſſimus.* No Man becomes thoroughly Wicked at once. It muſt be Step after Step. One Sin muſt be added to another. From a ſmall Heap they muſt riſe to a Mountain. And then let the Sinner prepare to meet *A JUDGMENT WORTHY OF GOD.* And therefore,

(o) Gen. xv. 16.

X. *Laſtly*, God does not always Puniſh Bad Men in this World, becauſe he *has appointed a Day* wherein he will paſs a ſtrict and impartial Judgment upon All Men, and will finally *render to every one according to his Works* (p). God needs not Puniſh Bad Men in this World, ſo long as he means to reckon with them in another World, and that ſooner or later they muſt fall into his hands. And ſince *a Thouſand Years with the Lord are but as one Day* (q), That ſhort Impunity which Bad Men

(p) Matth. xvi. 27.

(q) 2 Pet. iii. 8.

Men enjoy for a few Years in this World, attended with the endleſs Torments of another World, can be no Objection againſt the Divine Juſtice and Providence. Nay, Bad Men muſt account for this Impunity they now enjoy. It will aggravate their Guilt, and add to their Puniſhment, that they made no better uſe of the Opportunity of Grace that was put into their hands, not conſidering *that the Goodneſs of God led them to Repentance* (*r*). Nor is there a more certain Proof of a Future State (*ſ*), where God will retribute Puniſhments proportioned to every one's Demerits, than the Impunity of Bad Men in the World. That God does not Puniſh them now, ſays *Chryſoſtom* (*t*), is a Sad Preſage that he has ſome Terrible Vengeance in ſtore for them.

(*r*) Rom. ii. 4.

(*ſ*) *See Dr.* Sherlock *of Judgment. Ch.* i. §. 3.

(*t*) *Ad Pop.* Antioch. *Hom.* xlvi.

From what has been ſaid it may appear how little Reaſon ſome Men have to Impeach, and call into queſtion, the Divine Juſtice and Providence, becauſe Bad Men remain Unpuniſh'd in the World. Not that I think it poſſible to trace every Footſtep, and ſolve All the Various Phenomena of Providence in the World. God's *Judgments are a*

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great Deep (*u*): His *Ways are paſt finding out. For who has known the Mind of the Lord? and who has been his Counſellor* (*w*)? But we may know as much as is neceſſary to ſet our Minds at eaſe about this Matter: Wherein if any thing yet remains that we cannot now extricate, let us remember that a Day is coming that will clear up This, and all other Dark Paſſages of Providence. Then, we ſhall be able to give an account of every Accident that happens to every Man in this Life. We ſhall read in the Books of Heaven the Orders of the Divine Counſels: And there we ſhall ſee with what infinite Goodneſs, and Juſtice, and Wiſdom, God rules the World, and diſpoſes of Human Affairs. In the mean while, it becomes us to reverence the Inviſible Power and Majeſty of God; To ſtand in awe of his Judgments, tho' they ſeem never ſo far off; To *Work out our own Salvation with fear and trembling* (*x*): Being firmly perſwaded that God has ſet Bad Men *in ſlippery Places: He caſts them down, and deſtroys them. O how ſuddenly do they conſume, periſh, and come to a fearful End* (*y*)!

(*u*) Pſa. xxxvi. 6.

(*w*) Rom. xi. 33, 34.

(*x*) Phil. ii. 12.

(*y*) Pſal. lxxiii. 17, 18.

THE END.

Page 15. line 9. for *be Temperament*, r. *be a Temperament.*

SERMON sur l'Hymne Angélique & Eucharistique. *Luc.* II. 14. Prononcé dans l'Eglise de *St. Sauveur* en l'Isle de *JERSEY*, le 3me. jour d'*Avril*, 1687. jour de Cene. *4to.*

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